

REMARKS

This is a full and timely response to the outstanding non-final Office Action mailed June 14, 2004. Reconsideration and allowance of the application and presently pending claims 2-29 and 37-64, as amended, are respectfully requested.

1. Present Status of Patent Application

Upon entry of the amendments in this response, claims 2-29 and 37-64 remain pending in the present application. More specifically, claims 2, 9, 20, 25, 37, 44, 55 and 60 are directly amended and claims 1 and 30-36 are cancelled without prejudice, waiver, or disclaimer. These amendments were specifically described hereinbelow. It is believed that the foregoing amendments and additions add no new matter to the present application.

2. Indication of Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's statement that the subject matter of claims 2-29 and 37-64 is allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants amend dependent claims 2, 9, 20, 25, 37, 44, 55, and 60 to be in independent format. Since claims 3-8 depend ultimately on amended claim 2, which is now in condition for allowance, these claims 3-8 need not be amended to be in condition for allowance. Similarly, since claims 10-19 depend ultimately on amended claim 9 (now in condition for allowance), since claims 21-24 depend ultimately on amended claim 20 (now in condition for allowance), since claims 26-29 depend ultimately on amended claim 25 (now in condition for allowance), since claims 38-43 depend ultimately on amended claim 37 (now in condition for allowance), since claims 45-54 depend ultimately on amended claim 44 (now in condition for allowance), since claims 56-59 depend ultimately on amended claim 55 (now in condition for allowance), and since claims 61-64 depend ultimately on amended claim 60 (now in condition for allowance), these claims need not be amended to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, claims 2-29 and 37-64 are believed to be in condition for allowance without further examination.

Applicants wish to clarify that the amendments to claims 2, 9, 20, 25, 37, 44, 55, and 60 are made for purposes of placing the claims in condition for allowance, and not

in response to any rejections made based on cited art. Because a dependent claim as a matter of law inherently contains all of the limitations of its respective independent claim, and any intervening claims, the amendments to claims 2, 9, 20, 25, 37, 44, 55, and 60 do not additionally narrow the scope of claims 2, 9, 20, 25, 37, 44, 55, and 60 in any manner. The amendments to claims 2, 9, 20, 25, 37, 44, 55, and 60, now in independent claim format, merely add the text of limitations inherently included in claims 2, 9, 20, 25, 37, 44, 55, and 60 as originally filed. Indeed, Applicants submit that no substantive limitations have been added to the amended claims 2, 9, 20, 25, 37, 44, 55, and 60. Therefore, no prosecution history estoppel should arise from these amendments.

3. Response to Rejection of Claims 1 and 30-36 Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

In the Office Action, claims 1 and 30-36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being unpatentable by *Danahy et al.* (U.S. Patent 5,758,077). Claims 1 and 30-36 are cancelled without prejudice, waiver, or disclaimer, and therefore, the rejection to these claims are rendered moot. Applicants take this action merely to reduce the number of disputed issues and to facilitate early allowance and issuance of other claims in the present application. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of these cancelled claims in a continuing application, if Applicants so choose, and do not intend to dedicate any of the cancelled subject matter to the public.

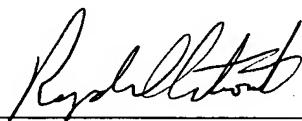
4. Telephonic Conversation with Examiner on August 18, 2004

On August 18, the Applicant's undersigned attorney and the Examiner discussed the possibility of scheduling an interview to discuss the merits of the case. The Examiner offered to call the undersigned attorney after reviewing the Applicant's Response, and *before* issuance of a Final Office Action, should any issues of patentability remain. Applicant thanks the Examiner for his willingness to call the undersigned attorney to discuss any remaining issues of patentability.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing amendments and for at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that all objections and/or rejections have been traversed, rendered moot, and/or accommodated, and that the now pending 2-29 and 37-64 are in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application and all pending claims are hereby courteously requested. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned agent at (770) 933-9500.

Respectfully submitted,



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